

EXCERPT

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The Pot Starts Boiling

Things were beginning to happen faster in Washington with the return of the President and Congress from Easter holidays.

The new U.S.-Russian treaty on strategic-arms limitation—SALT—was all but formally settled. A showdown on a windfall-oil-profits tax was at hand. New figures showed the economy at a critical point, teetering between recession and stepped-up inflation.

Those are just the high points. It's a time when the pot is starting to boil on issue after issue.

At the center of the activity is Jimmy Carter. The President, fresh from relaxing in the Georgia sun, prepared to send a sheaf of controversial proposals to Capitol Hill.

Lawmakers, back in session, seemed less determined to enact much legislation. For the 96th Congress, large-scale action would be something new: It has passed only eight bills since convening in January, the slowest start in 40 years.

But the leisurely pace appeared to be coming to an end.

Diplomats assured as much in mid-April, when they ironed out all but final details of the SALT II package. The next step was to arrange specifics of a summit between Carter and Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev.

Aim of treaty. SALT II will go beyond the first strategic-arms agreement by putting firmer ceilings on the numbers of intercontinental missiles, bombers and warheads the two superpowers can have.

Even before final provisions of the treaty were laid out, SALT debate built up steam. Senators who must vote on the pact already are choosing up sides.

Opponents seized on testimony before Congress by Central Intelligence Agency Director Stansfield Turner that indicated the U.S. may not be able to monitor potential cheating on the treaty by the Russians. The reason is loss of electronic stations in Iran. The